

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I    [ ] Charter    [X] Magnet    [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Beverly Lusk

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name George Bannerman Dealey Montessori School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 6501 Royal Lane

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Dallas State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75230-4142

County Dallas County

Telephone (972) 794-8400 Fax (972) 794-8401

Web site/URL http://www.dallasisd.org/dealey E-mail BeLusk@dallasisd.org

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/groups/gbdpta/ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Dr. Michael Hinojosa E-mail HINOJOSAM@dallasisd.org

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Dallas Independent School District Tel. (972) 925-3700

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Eric Cowan

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 155 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 41 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 43 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 239 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	17	16	33
K	14	19	33
1	25	42	67
2	29	34	63
3	23	42	65
4	27	30	57
5	27	33	60
6	26	31	57
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	188	247	435

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 12 % Asian
  - 9 % Black or African American
  - 32 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 40 % White
  - 6 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 1%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	0
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	3
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	3
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	438
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.007
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	1

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 5 %  
21 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Amharic, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Hindi, French, German, Japanese, Swedish, Hungarian, Romanian, Dutch, Mandarin, Cantonese, Italian

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 36 %  
Total number students who qualify: 155

8. Students receiving special education services: 4 %  
16 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 3 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 0 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 1 Multiple Disabilities
- 1 Orthopedic Impairment
- 0 Other Health Impaired
- 0 Specific Learning Disability
- 11 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 0 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 0 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers	21
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	7
Paraprofessionals	7
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	5

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 22:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	98%	99%	98%	99%	98%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
Yes    No X

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Our mission is to provide an exemplary education that develops and empowers all students to become productive citizens in a global society.

**16. For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

All applicants for PK and Kindergarten are assessed on basic readiness skills (identification of colors, numbers, shapes, body parts, familiar objects in the environment, knowledge of personal information, etc.) and observed and scored on how well they follow directions, work during interview without disturbing others, show self-control, separate from adult, and cooperate during the assessment. The parents are also asked to write a letter of interest to include in the applicant's file.

Applicants for 1st grade are assessed on math and problem solving skills and observed and scored on how well they follow directions, work during assessment without disturbing others, show self-control and cooperate during the assessment. They are also asked to turn in a confidential survey filled out by their current teacher and 5 work samples to be reviewed by the Dealey teachers.

Applicants for 2nd and 3rd grade are assessed on their ability to write about something they have learned and observed and scored on how well they follow directions, work during assessment without disturbing others, show self-control and cooperate during assessment. They are also asked to turn in a confidential survey filled out by their current teacher, a current report card, nationally normed test scores in reading and math, and 5 work samples to be reviewed by the Dealey teachers.

Applicants for 4th, 5th and 6th grade are assessed on their writing skills by writing an essay from a given prompt. They are also asked to turn in a copy of their most recent report card, nationally normed test scores in reading and math or STAAR results, and 5 work samples to be reviewed by the Dealey teachers.

After all applications are submitted with supporting documents and their on campus interviews or assessments have been completed, their scores are calculated and they are ranked accordingly. Several factors such as a sibling rule and attendance zones are considered when determining our final list of candidates to ensure Dealey receives a diverse population where students are equally selected from all areas of the district.

Final recommendation letters are sent to parents the last week of February.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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George Bannerman Dealey Montessori is a Title 1 magnet school that serves 438 PK-6 children of the 88,824 PK-6 children enrolled in 151 elementary schools in the 12th largest school district in the United States: Dallas Independent School District (DISD). The historical seeds of Dealey were sown in the late 1970s, when magnet schools were created to ensure desegregation in DISD. Dealey Montessori thus began over 40 years ago as a school-within-a-school, and its official naming as Dealey Montessori was a major milestone in 1994, when the school relocated to its current renovated campus.

Geographically, Dealey is located in a wealthy northern Dallas community where many local children attend private schools. Dealey students are bussed from over 45 different zip codes across the 312 square miles of the public school district. A point of pride at Dealey is the continuation of the tradition of public school racial, linguistic, and economic diversity: over 25 home languages are represented; 39% of students are economically disadvantaged, 41% qualify for gifted and talented, 17% are considered at risk, and the racial demographics are uniquely balanced in the district: 12% Asian, 10% Black, 35% Hispanic, 37% White, and 6% other.

The educational philosophy at Dealey is to deliver a high-quality public school education focused on rigorous academic standards using Montessori methods of teaching to instill in its students several foundations for success: leadership, self-discipline, self-confidence, passion, purpose, lifelong learning, and community involvement. The focus on Montessori methods provides one of Dealey's unique opportunities for a strong foundation of teachers; Dealey's 27 teachers hold Texas state teaching credentials and also complete two additional years of rigorous, nationally certified training in Montessori methods. They are career educators, as evidenced by retention data: 78% have taught for over 3 years; 33% have taught for 11-20 years; and over 85% of teachers are retained annually.

Teachers at Dealey take a number of actions to ensure that students receive a rigorous education using Montessori methods: plan weekly in vertical and horizontal teams to align state standards within the Montessori scope and sequence of learning; create innovative hands-on materials that enable students to learn subject areas; present at national conferences on teaching Montessori in the public sector; examine assessment data to shape planning for each learning cycle; collaborate constructively with the Dealey leadership team; and communicate regularly with families through online communication, weekly flyers, and conferences.

The results of this interwoven web of committed individuals are remarkable, as evidenced by Dealey students' academic, emotional, physical, social, and cultural success. First, academically, all 20 classrooms at Dealey are multi-age, which allows younger students to gain initial exposure to higher-order concepts and older students to experience full integration of academic content across grade-level bands and subject-area boundaries. Classrooms use highly differentiated instruction to allow for individual learning, small group instruction, and whole class activities. Achievement data speaks well of these approaches. On the state-mandated STAAR assessments and on the nationally normed Iowa Test of Basic Skills for 2014-15, passing rates are consistently high—over 90% across all areas, as compared with district-wide averages between 50-60%.

Social and emotional growth are explicitly addressed in the Montessori philosophy. Socially, multi-age classrooms allow for the blending of age groups so that children can develop friendships based on common interests, developmental stages, and personality types. Additionally, students mature socially by organizing their own learning through self-paced and self-directed decision-making: which materials to use, which learning objectives to focus on, and which types of teacher and peer support to use. Teachers ensure that students' individual choices lead them to meet all curricular goals. Emotional development is also nurtured through a number of explicit programs: role modeling through writing partnerships, cross-grade peer tutoring, counselor-led discussion groups, and anti-bullying role-playing.

Physical development is supported for all grades through mandatory PE/health education twice each week and through weekly classroom gardening. Culturally, the array of enrichment opportunities at Dealey ranges from its in-school offerings of orchestra, choir, art, PE, outdoor gardening, field trips, and career days, to its after-school programming of an award-winning chess team, school-wide soccer club (with girl and boy teams across the PK-6 grades), computer coding programs, drama club, science club, tennis, basketball, baseball, and scouts.

The Dealey community is proud and grateful to be nominated for the Blue Ribbon Award. Our school has been held up locally as an exemplar within the district and has played a key role in inspiring the school board to create 7 new magnet elementary offerings in the next two years. With this honor, we hope to stimulate even more such forward-thinking educational options for ever larger numbers of urban school children to learn in a community of diverse students and highly qualified teachers that lead to successful outcomes on all fronts of child development.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

The Dealey curriculum is a balance between the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) approved by the State Board of Education and the Montessori Method known by its accreditation through AMI (Association Montessori Internationale) or AMS (American Montessori Society). This marriage of a hundred-year-old learning style that emphasizes multi-age learning and differentiated teaching requires adaptation from teachers and school administrators, which has resulted in the alignment of the state TEKS with district curriculum maps, interim assessments, and the Montessori curriculum.

One key component of Montessori education is the mixed-age classroom. At Dealey, the classrooms combine students into three groupings: Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, first through third grade, and fourth through sixth grade. Multi-age classrooms expose younger children to higher-level concepts when they are individually ready to learn those concepts, and it also provides the older children a chance to solidify their knowledge by making connections across subject materials and across grade levels. A high percentage (41%) of our students qualify for Gifted and Talented enrichment services and receive weekly additional learning opportunities with a dedicated Gifted and Talented instructor. Children are not singled out as needing special attention; those performing either above or below grade level are fully integrated in the classroom, even as their unique needs are met, as in the illustrative examples below.

The core subjects of reading and English language arts in the primary classrooms begin with tactile manipulatives such as sandpaper letters and object boxes to help children identify initial sounds using materials. As children progress into grades 1-3 classrooms, the concrete materials from these primary stages of learning are replaced with pictures and symbols to represent parts of speech. By the time Dealey children reach grades 4-6, they have moved to Montessori curriculum cards with strands focused on dictation/spelling, nomenclature, handwriting, sentence analysis, composition, grammar and word-study. These curriculum cards become individualized textbooks which allow for below-level students to focus on their needed areas of learning and for above-level students to work at their own paces beyond the group expectations. During literature study, below-level students fully participate in discussions by having active models, leading discussion, and working with leveled texts, while above-level students can be challenged with more complex texts and varied genres.

Montessori math at Dealey begins with concrete materials and progresses to more abstraction. Specially designed tactile materials for math, such as number rods, counting beads, and fraction plates, are proportionally sized for each unit of study to help the student understand the composition and manipulation of numbers. These materials also help below-level students move back into concrete learning strategies for added support in the transition to abstract thinking. The children's familiarity with the materials aids their transition into multi-digit multiplication, division, and fractions. By upper elementary, or even earlier for students above-grade level, students have progressed to abstract thinking, and are also able to visually demonstrate their underlying conceptual understanding.

The science curriculum at Dealey begins with experiences in both zoology and botany as early as the pre-kindergarten year. Zoology begins with the external parts of five vertebrates along with similar lessons in botany for the parts of plants. In lower elementary, the students go beyond nomenclature and include definition and function of each part. Students go deeper into botany at this age as they study the specific types and function of roots, stems and leaves that allow students to identify plants through their characteristics. By upper elementary, students work on the internal parts of vertebrates and extend into study of invertebrates. In addition, upper elementary students in grades 4-6 have weekly physics and chemistry lessons in the science lab with a full-time dedicated science instructor. Above-level students do independent research, and below-level students can use multiple modes, such as technology, for demonstrations of learning.

Social studies at Dealey emphasizes a spiraled curriculum, in which pre-kindergarten students begin with a personal timeline of their own lives. Students create conceptual maps to learn about US history and global trends in economics, politics, geography, and culture. The grades 1-3 journey continues with a Timeline of Life that exposes them to the different eras since the creation of Earth. Primary students also use tactile puzzle maps to help learn continents, countries, and history. This expands into the Fundamental Needs of Man that highlights the progress humans have made from prehistoric times to modern times. Below-level students receive peer and teacher scaffolding, and for the above-level students, the curriculum has no ceiling, so they can work above grade-level on more complex maps.

For the Pre-K/K, because of the spiraled curriculum, the core curriculum has already been described in the above section. Areas of alignment include the core curriculum and areas such as promoting student autonomy, using similar materials across the grades, developing classroom behaviors and standards, and learning social and emotional norms with peers. This alignment allows students to enter the grades 1-3 classroom with several school-ready indicators: reading at grade level, mastery of basic math knowledge and skills, intrinsic motivation and behavioral self-regulation.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In addition to the core curriculum, students have a broad spectrum of other educational opportunities. Montessori education involves the whole child with planned integration of concepts to help children connect their knowledge base across the disciplines. Dealey teachers incorporate the TEKS in ways that work across non-core curricular areas: art, music, technology, health/nutrition, physical education, and gardening.

Art and music education at Dealey are each offered each week for an hour. All children in PK-6 have art every week with a full-time art teacher and have music every week with one of 2 full-time dedicated music teachers (one choir and one orchestra). In both subjects, students fulfill the TEKS of engaging in aesthetic and cultural awareness and developing the four strands associated with fine arts: observation and perception, creative expression, historical/cultural relevance, and critical consumption (TEKS, Ch. 117). Art programming involves aspects such as identifying the elements of art, creating multiple types of artworks, and expressing ideas about personal and historical arts. Music programming offers the unique opportunity for students as early as first grade to choose between choir or orchestra. Students in music class begin with age appropriate songs that spiral through gaining exposure to different music genres, to developing an understanding of different instruments, and to learning about sight singing. In orchestra, students can choose violin or cello and follow the Suzuki method of instruction. In both choir and orchestra, music education covers the description and analysis of musical sounds, the performance of a wide variety of music types, the study of music in its historical and cultural context, and the ability to evaluate musical performances (TEKS, Ch. 117).

Dealey teachers have integrated technology use into the core areas of learning in ways that address the TEKS strands of creativity/innovation, communication/collaboration, research/information fluency, problem solving, digital citizenship, and operations/concepts (TEKS, Ch. 126). Students have access to computers and iPads in every classroom from first through sixth grades. To address basic operations and concepts, students use district-wide digital math- and reading-based programs to support individualized learning and to become familiar with basic terminology and operating systems. For communication, students use these web-based programs for home-school communication about their learning and for writing, revising, and conducting peer review on their essays. For promoting information fluency, research, and problem solving, students utilize Internet research in their independent practice to extend their learning and complete group projects in science and social studies. In addition to this regular classroom integration, students in 4-6 grades receive technology instruction every week for 45 minutes to ensure digital citizenship and to participate in project-based learning.

Dealey's physical education curriculum emphasizes learning by doing through physical and mental skill development. All Pre-K-6 Dealey students have at least 2 one-hour physical education classes per week. Dealey's two certified physical education instructors cover the TEKS developing knowledge and skills for movement and an understanding of body control through modules of aerobics, stretching, sports, dancing, and dietary wellness (TEKS, Ch. 116). Health and nutrition TEKS (Ch. 115), particularly those related to

personal and interpersonal skills and communication, as well as health behaviors of safety rules and healthy lifestyles are also covered. Dealey students have also participated in the Dairy Max Healthy Zone Schools program, the NFL Fuel Up to Play 60 program, the American Heart Association Jump Rope for Hearts, Family Fitness Night(s), and an annual Field Day in the spring.

Finally, every classroom at Dealey has its own outdoor garden plot managed by the teacher and maintained by the students on a daily basis. All students in Pre-K-6 participate in gardening at least once each week: clearing the plots, preparing the soil, planting seeds, tending plants, harvesting the yield, and exploring new tastes. Teachers leverage these gardening experiences as opportunities to reinforce the TEKS across curricular areas. Examples include the following: science TEKS through testing hypotheses about acidity and soil hardness, and monitoring weather patterns; math TEKS through calculating harvest time, measuring plants, and charting rates of growth; language arts TEKS of expanding vocabulary, comparison and contrast writing, and writing non-fiction through garden journals; and health/nutrition TEKS such as knowing how external factors (i.e., gardens for consumption) influence individual, family, and community health and analyzing food for nutritional content and for making healthy food choices.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

At Dealey, teachers provide an exemplary education that empowers all students. As noted above, the core philosophy is the Montessori Method. In each multiage classroom, younger students are exposed to higher-level concepts without an active awareness of the knowledge they have obtained. Additionally, Dealey's approach provides the older children an opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of skills by assisting a younger student or reviewing the lesson again. Students are encouraged to make connections across grade levels and subject-areas.

Differentiated instruction is inherent in a Montessori classroom. Dealey instructors seek to maximize individual student growth, as they understand that all students have different starting places. Each student's foundation is identified, and their educational plan is developed within the framework of the broader curriculum goals. Dealey classrooms are well situated with a variety of materials that cover different subject areas and ability levels, thus supporting. For example, teachers use a reading program that encourages students to learn at their own pace. It allows teachers to assess children's individual reading levels and start them on a pathway at any level between Pre-K through Middle School. Additionally, Dealey incorporates a math and language curricula that enable students to work in a similar fashion. Each of these programs addresses the needs of everyone in the classroom—from students with high academic skills to students who need support.

It is Dealey's goal to create an environment that includes a variety of learning modalities and that fosters choice. Students are allowed to choose the order in which they complete assignments and to decide which materials they will use to complete certain tasks. The classrooms are equipped with large works that are shared among students. Students also work alone on tasks, either at a desk, on the floor, in the hallway, or in the garden. As students collaborate, they can be seen working independently on particular tasks then putting the pieces together for a final product. All of this fosters critical thinking and understanding of the flow of large projects.

Lastly, the three-year cycle is an integral aspect of the Montessori philosophy at Dealey. The continuity of instruction by the same educator eliminates time lost on reassessment by new teachers each fall. It also allows the instructors to adjust a particular student's learning pattern to reflect his or her specific speed of learning. For children who need additional academic stimulation, they are able to progress beyond just the normal educational materials relevant to that grade level. Results of this three-year cycle have shown that this unique learning environment allows the majority of Dealey students to be prepared well above grade level norms when they leave Dealey.

#### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Assessment is an integral component of the instructional cycle at Dealey. Teachers use multiple data sources from standardized testing and formative classroom assessments. Formal assessment follows district-wide local, state, and nationally normed assessments. Local assessments include interim Academic Course Performance (ACP) exams, which ensure alignment with the TEKS. The district has also adopted an online progress monitoring program for grades K-2 to monitor reading progress three times each year. State-level exams include the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) across grade levels and subject areas. Nationally normed assessments include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), administered to all students in grades K-2.

Systematic processes are in place to ensure that data inform instruction and intervention decisions on a routine basis. Teachers compare and analyze assessment data that are immediately available through Dallas ISD online data portals. Data are displayed in ways that allow for immediate analysis of results at both a classroom level and by individual student skills. Teachers have weekly team meetings to identify trends, to discuss patterns, and to identify solutions that will result in student growth. These solutions often involve the collaborative enactment of differentiated lesson plans that assist students performing both above and below grade level. When gaps of 10 or more percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of subgroups are identified on any of the assessments, a full-time dedicated intervention teacher at Dealey provides additional support in structured, daily pull-out intervention in individual and small group instruction to address the academic needs of students. Small groups are limited to a maximum of five students to ensure individualized attention, and progress is monitored so students can exit when the point gap closes. Students who achieve high scores on the ITBS are automatically nominated to test for the Gifted and Talented program and are assessed through a parent checklist and a non-verbal IQ and creativity test. This regular process of teacher review of data, followed by weekly team meetings, allows for careful development and documentation of intervention plans that ensure the high levels of achievement at Dealey are being maintained.

Results of assessment are communicated with stakeholders in several ways. Parents and students have access to an online data portal to daily and weekly monitor progress, report cards are issued every six weeks, and parent/teacher conferences are held each semester. Information about school-level assessment data is provided through weekly PTA newsletters, monthly principal reports, and annual district school report cards.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Dealey Montessori engages and motivates students by educating the whole child. Students work at their own pace in a calm and peaceful environment. They are engaged in interesting, hands-on lessons that provide depth and rigor. Our school encourages students to think outside the box and not to be afraid of making mistakes. Dealey provides a positive environment that supports academic, social, and emotional growth in a variety of ways. This peaceful and supportive environment contributes to the success of our students, staff and school.

In addition to providing emotional support to our students, for example, the Dealey school counselor coordinates Red Ribbon Week, Anti-Bullying Campaigns, and Angel Tree donations. The healthy lifestyles program also provides incentives for classroom integration. Events like Jump Rope for Heart raise awareness and encourage philanthropic growth. Students are encouraged to expand their knowledge outside the classroom by participating in extra-curricular programs and activities like Chess Club, Science Fair, Spelling Bee, Club Scientific and Robotics Club.

Dealey has a wonderful Gifted and Talented Program, for which 41% of our students qualify and participate in. Once a year the GT Program hosts an Independent Study Fair showcasing student work. A school-wide favorite is the annual game show event, “Are You Smarter Than a 3rd Grader?” in which parents compete against the Dealey 3rd grade “experts.”

Dealey teachers feel valued and supported by the administration, by the parents and by the students. The campus beliefs are shared during morning announcements and are displayed in all learning environments. The administrative leadership team empowers teachers to make instructional decisions that are in the best interests of students. Instead of mandating each teacher use the same materials and lessons, administrators encourage teachers to develop lessons according to the Montessori curriculum thereby meeting the needs of each individual classroom. Because Dealey is a Title 1 school, many of its students are in need of financial assistance. Dealey’s supportive PTA gives generously of their time and money to support the classroom needs. This year the PTA created a scholarship fund to cover the costs of extra-curricular activities. The Dealey instructional leadership team and Site-Based Decision Committee (SBDC) keep the lines of communication open among administration, staff, and parents. The administration, office staff, and counselor all work hand-in-hand to ensure that all student and teacher needs are met. For example, Dealey teachers are very dedicated and have the opportunity to expand their knowledge of Montessori curriculum by attending training specifically designed for Dealey students. Once a teacher becomes a Dealey teacher, they tend to stay a Dealey teacher; in fact, the retention rate of teachers at Dealey is typically well over 85% from year to year, and over 40% of the teachers have been in the classroom for over 11 years.

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

As a Montessori school, Dealey believes the whole child should be successful and understands that it takes strong family and community ties to achieve their goals. Dealey families spend countless hours working with students every day as class garden coordinators, reading parents, volunteers for the Nature Exchange, PTA events, and after-school activities and sports such as drama club, computer coding club, tennis, basketball, and soccer. The PTA hosts movie nights, health fairs and field day, all of which help strengthen the bonds among students, staff, teachers, and families. Dealey PTA encourages every parent to participate in a program called a “Day for Dealey,” which results in thousands of volunteer hours clocked every year.

Dealey’s family and community engagement is directly connected with student achievement. Every week a retired teacher joins Dealey parents to spend hours in Chess Club, for example, where students learn the skills and strategies they need to compete in all-day tournaments. Students learn critical thinking and problem solving skills that lead to academic success in the classroom. Weekly, a team of parents leads our students in Discovery Imagination classes encouraging them to think outside the box, to try something new, and to learn from their mistakes as they lead to discovery. These classes build stamina and endurance in the

classroom and encourage students to persevere. In the fall, each year for the last 21 years, teachers and parents take all sixth grade students to an outdoor overnight camping adventure. During that week, students engage in cultural and biological science lessons. Families have reported that their children solidify their lifelong connection to Dealey at this culminating event.

The diverse school population brings children from 45 zip codes throughout the city of Dallas together from homes where over 19 different languages are spoken. The fact that our families are spread all over Dallas makes Dealey's PTA an anomaly. They host multiple events that raise funds for classroom and school needs. From coordinating Box Tops for Education to selling Dealey Dragon spirit wear, we could not ask for more involvement. Dealey PTA organizes a fall carnival and spring auction reaching out businesses all over Dallas that graciously donate goods and services. These events raise record amounts of funds annually. Proceeds go directly to school improvement that range from creating new playground equipment to purchasing Montessori materials for classrooms.

No other extracurricular activity impacts the Dealey Community like the Dealey Soccer Club (DSC). As of Spring 2016, the DSC has 17 soccer teams ranging in age from Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade. In addition to actively engaging almost 1/3 of the Dealey student body, the DSC has helped fund a sprinkler system for the Dealey grounds and has negotiated a significantly reduced fee for children to play soccer through the local YMCA.

### 3. Professional Development:

At Dealey Montessori, professional development is tightly aligned with the needs of the campus. This process was initiated with a survey, in which teachers expressed what professional development opportunities were needed to lever their own instructional practices and those of the campus as a whole. The message was clear that continuing education around the Montessori method was our top priority.

Professional growth is not limited to teachers alone. The administrative team takes an active role in all professional development sessions to better understand how to support teachers with instruction.

Throughout the course of the year, Dealey hosted multiple professional development sessions on campus, presented by experienced Montessori guides. The entire Montessori staff attended a fall Montessori conference to collaborate and learn along with other Montessori teachers from within and outside the district. This spring, the majority of the teachers will also travel to the National Montessori Conference in Chicago to further develop skills and grow professionally. Through all of these experiences, Dealey has been able to provide refreshers for veteran teachers while also presenting new information to beginning teachers.

Because Dealey is a Montessori school within a public school district, they recognize the value in seeking professional development opportunities that will allow them to have a deeper understanding of the TEKS. Therefore, Dealey teachers participate in monthly training opportunities with teachers of similar grade levels and content areas and share strategies for improvement. The teachers work tirelessly to ensure they are aligning the curriculum appropriately to meet state standards without compromising the integrity of the Montessori Method of teaching. For this reason, Dealey alternates their weeks of professional development with horizontal planning meetings in which teachers take time to discuss the implementation of new ideas along with the challenges and celebrations that may accompany them. These planning sessions include development of lesson plans and assessments used to gauge how well students have mastered the content presented through the lessons. This is also an opportunity for veteran teachers to share their expertise and to help develop others, because new teachers add fresh perspectives and insights to the curriculum and instruction.

At Dealey, all of these professional development sessions support learning and student achievement. District assessments consistently show that Dealey students out-perform their peers across the district. This same success is evident in the end-of-year STAAR scores. For the past two years, Dealey Montessori has been recognized as a Title I Reward School for High Performance and High Progress.

#### 4. School Leadership:

At Dealey Montessori, teamwork is a main contributor to their success. Decision-making is a collaborative effort in every aspect of the school. The school staff works closely with parents and community members to ensure that the school's mission and vision are met and that students are provided an exemplary education. The Dealey team values input from all stakeholders and seeks feedback throughout the year to make decisions that are in the best interest of the school.

The administrative team consists of a principal and assistant principal who share a strong philosophy of distributive leadership. Together, they work to empower leadership in others. As part of the campus improvement plan, one entire key action is dedicated toward increasing leadership density among staff members. Staff members are encouraged to embrace growth opportunities and identify areas of expertise and interest to exert influence among others. This is evident as many choose to chair committees, initiate extra-curricular activities, mentor new teachers, lead Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and provide professional development at the campus, district, and national level. With 67% of Dealey's teaching staff qualifying for the Distinguished Teacher Review through the district's new evaluation system, many master teachers have model classrooms where teachers from across the district spend time observing and learning.

The leadership team is equally committed to providing opportunities in which frequent collaboration exists among staff members. Through these efforts, they are able to strengthen curriculum alignment, discuss best practices for instruction, review data, design interventions, and plan for student programs that allow students opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom. Through these Professional Learning Communities, they are able to build teacher capacity and to work as members of high-performing teams that focus on improving student learning. The campus instructional leadership team and grade-level chairs lead these collaborative teams and also serve as a bridge of communication between teachers and administrators. Using our campus improvement plan as a guide, they assist to ensure that PLC conversations are aligned with programs and resources that directly support student achievement.

Leadership expands beyond the faculty and staff members. A strong, active PTA provides support through multiple volunteering and fundraising efforts. Within the PTA, over 18 committees focus their efforts on specific areas of the school. As a result, teachers and students are supported with the resources they need to be successful. The Site-Based Decision Making Team also serves as a valuable support by working with staff members to identify issues, develop resolution to problems, and make changes to strategies that can make a positive impact on the school.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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The main practice that makes Dealey academically successful is the Montessori philosophy; a few key elements that contribute to the success of Dealey include the following: multi-age classrooms, small group lessons, and pedagogical strategies that focus on moving from the concrete to the abstract. The multiage classrooms at Dealey contribute to the academic success of the students by eliminating the probationary period that characterizes the phase when students and teachers learn each other's style in the first weeks of the year. Teachers at Dealey learn about their students' learning styles because the students remain in the same class for up to three years.

Lessons in the classrooms at Dealey are given in small group settings and as individualized, one-on-one instruction. Teachers also are better able to understand where the students are in their learning and are able to see if children are struggling to learn a concept. From there, the teacher has the freedom to adjust lessons to help children fully understand what they are working on. Because the teachers have an understanding of each child's learning style and because they have the ability to give lessons with children individually, children at Dealey have a customized education that gives them the best possibility of absorbing, retaining, and recalling the objectives of the curriculum.

The learning materials and resources at Dealey also have a purpose that guides children in their learning. Each of the materials tied to units are created to make concepts concrete and tangible. As children develop from lower to upper elementary, they are reintroduced to the lessons in different ways and with increasing degrees of difficulty. Each time the child revisits a lesson, concrete materials are gradually shifted away, which moves the child to stages of abstract learning. The goal for children is to comprehend lessons at an abstract level.

Assessment data from Dealey students showcase how the instruction at Dealey manifests in standardized testing. For example, student achievement data on the state-mandated STAAR assessments for 2014-15 was high across all subject areas: in reading 95% passed, in writing 94% passed, in science 95% passed; and in math 94% passed. These high passing rates contrast with district-wide averages that hover between 50-60% pass rates. Also, in the reading portion of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Dealey students scored in the high 90th percentile and in math in the mid-90th percentile, as compared with a district average between the 50th and 60th percentiles. In short, assessment data from Dealey students provides evidence that teachers and school leaders who work in a climate of trust and accountability can promote high academic achievement on standardized tests. The materials, classrooms, teachers, leadership, families, and students all contribute to Dealey's academic success.